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VIRGINIA ENERGY PLAN

The Commonwealth of Virginia's 2018 Energy Plan

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE AND TRADE
DEPARTMENT OF MINES, MINERALS AND ENERGY

DISPROPORTIONATE ADVERSE IMPACTS

Virginia is dedicated to ensuring that there are not disproportionate impacts on economically-disadvantaged or minority communities during the siting of energy resources. Ensuring that certain populations are not disproportionately impacted during energy development is critical to environmental justice efforts.

Environmental justice is defined as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, faith, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.⁶⁵ The siting of projects is one aspect of environmental justice, but there are broader environmental justice initiatives percolating and developing within the Commonwealth.

Governor Northam has taken steps to help Virginia gain a better understanding of the Commonwealth's environmental justice needs by continuing the Advisory Council on Environmental Justice (the Council). The Council is tasked with providing independent advice and recommendations to the Governor and his cabinet.

The Governor also signed Executive Order 6 (EO6) on April 4, 2018 to support the critical role of DEQ to protect Virginia's air, water, and public health.⁶⁶ EO6 requires DEQ to improve communication with the public and the regulated community and provide more opportunities for proactive education, especially among underserved and low-income populations. As part of the EO6 stakeholder process, DEQ has gathered input on ways in which communications may be enhanced to reach more communities during decision-making processes.

In addition, Virginia has deployed mechanisms to assist low-income communities by increasing access to energy efficiency and renewable energy resources. The recommendations that follow in the sections below provide additional options to expand these clean energy resources in a way that benefits underserved and low-income populations. Finally, DEQ's existing obligations to ensure that all regulated entities comply with health-based standards will continue in all permitting activities to reduce public health burdens on all populations.